

community as a newly elected member of the Board of Directors of the Imperial County Farm Bureau.

Don has been a member of the Brawley Rotary Club for over 30 years, a member of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks-Lodge #1420 for over 40 years and a lifelong member of the Imperial Valley Navy League. He has also served his community as a member of the Brawley Union High School Quarterback Club.

Throughout my many years in Congress, I have valued Don's insight into, and knowledge of, the many important issues facing the IID and the farming community in the Imperial Valley. It is my distinct privilege to honor my distinguished friend.

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FAIRNESS AND EQUITY FOR FEDERAL RETIREES WITH PART-TIME SERVICE

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**HON. JAMES P. MORAN**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, January 3, 2001*

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, today, I am reintroducing legislation to correct a long-standing inequity that affects a great number of Federal retirees in my district and throughout the Nation who have served for a portion of their careers in a part-time capacity. I am pleased that Mr. DAVIS of Virginia, Mr. WYNN, Ms. NORTON, Mrs. MORELLA, Mr. WOLF, and Mr. GILMAN have joined me as original cosponsors of this important legislation.

The current retirement formula for Federal workers with part-time service was enacted by Congress in 1986 as a provision of the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) (P.L. 99-272). For the most part, the reforms contained in COBRA were fair. They ensured an equitable calculation for all employees hired after 1986 and prevented part-time employees from gaming the system in order to receive a disproportionately higher benefit. The 1986 reforms were based on a procedure developed and recommended to the Congress by the General Accounting Office (GAO). In a nutshell, the new methodology determines the proportion of a full-time career that a part-time employee works and scales annuities accordingly. Under the formula, a part-time worker's salary is calculated on a full-time equivalent basis (FTE) for retirement purposes. Thus, a worker's "high-three salary" could occur during a period of part-time service. This often happens when a senior level worker cuts back on his or her hours to care for an ill spouse or deal with other personal matters. Many of the people in this situation are women.

The problem is that the 1986 law had unintended and often unfair consequences for workers hired before 1986 who have some part-time service after 1986. Specifically, according to the way the law has been implemented by OPM, some part-time workers are not able to apply their full-time equivalent (FTE) salary to pre-1986 employment. This effectively limits their ability to receive the advantage of their "high-three average" salary for their entire careers. The reason for this in-

equity can be traced to subsection (c) of Section 15204 of COBRA. It provides that the new formula shall be effective with respect to service performed "on or after the date of the enactment of this Act."

Whether this was a drafting error, or whether OPM has taken an unnecessarily restrictive reading of the statute is hard to determine. What is clear is that the current practice is plainly contrary to the intent of the Congress, which was to grandfather existing employees into the new system and to ensure that no Federal workers would be harmed by changes in the retirement formula.

In a letter dated February 19, 1987 to then-OPM Director Constance Horner, the Chairman of the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, The Honorable William D. Ford, objected to this anomalous and unfair result. He wrote:

As in many other instances involving benefits, Congress chose to protect or to "grandfather" past service—to apply the new benefit formula only to future service rather than previously performed service under the older, more generous formula. This policy is often adopted to avoid penalizing individuals through the retroactive application of changes not anticipated by them. (As a measure of fairness, the policy of prospectivity is often applied to benefit improvements as well.)

Notwithstanding Chairman Ford's efforts to clarify congressional intent, this inequity has continued for 14 years. OPM has publicly acknowledged that there is a problem with COBRA. Director Lachance stated publicly in a letter to Chairman Fred Thompson of the Senate Committee on Government Affairs: "I agree that an end-of-career change to a part-time work schedule can have an unanticipated adverse effect on the amount of the retirement benefit." She also acknowledges in that same letter that a comparable bill in the other body, S. 772 introduced by Senator ROBB, "would eliminate the potential for anomalous computations by providing that the full time salary would be applicable to all service regardless of when it was performed while the proration of service credit would apply only to service after April 6, 1986 [the date of enactment]."

This is precisely what the bill we are offering today does. It allows the retirees affected by this inequity to have their full-time equivalent salary for their high 3 years to apply to their entire careers, not just the portion after 1986. My bill differs from S. 772 in that it places the burden on affected retirees to request a recalculation of benefits. This is coupled with a requirement that OPM conduct a good faith effort to notify annuitants of their right to obtain a recalculation. For all future retirees, benefits will be calculated in accordance with the new formula.

This bill is identical to a measure I sponsored last year. That legislation was cosponsored by seven members of the House and was endorsed by the National Association of Federal Workers in July. NARFE has made the bill a high priority.

Mr. Speaker, this is a matter of great consequence to many Americans who devoted their most productive years to public service. Some of my constituents have annuities that are thousands of dollars less than they would be under my bill. As I indicated, a dispropor-

tionate share of these retirees appears to be women, who left the federal service to care for others.

It is particularly appropriate that we address this issue now, as changing work-force needs and lifestyles make part-time service more popular, both from the standpoint of the worker and the employee. Many of the anticipated work-force shortages that are anticipated in the federal civil service can and should be met with part-time workers. I am concerned that they will not be so long as the anomalous and unfair provisions of P.L. 99-272 are allowed to stand. I urge my colleagues to join me in cosponsoring this important legislation.

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PROTECT OUR FLAG

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**HON. JO ANN EMERSON**

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, January 3, 2001*

Mrs. EMERSON. Mr. Speaker, today I introduce a constitutional amendment for the protection of our nation's flag. The flag is a revered symbol of America's great tradition of liberty and democratic government, and it ought to be protected from acts of desecration that diminish us all.

As you know, there have been several attempts to outlaw by statute the desecration of the flag. Both Congress and state legislatures have passed such measures in recent years, only to be overruled later by decisions of the Supreme Court. It is clear that nothing short of an amendment to the Constitution will ensure that Old Glory has the complete and unqualified protection of the law.

The most common objection to this kind of amendment is that it unduly infringes on the freedom of speech. However, this objection disregards the fact that our freedoms are not practiced beyond the bounds of common sense and reason. As is often the case, there are reasonable exceptions to the freedom of speech, such as libel, obscenity, trademarks, and the like. Desecration of the flag is this kind of act, something that goes well beyond the legitimate exercising of a right. It is a wholly disgraceful and unacceptable form of behavior, an affront to the proud heritage and tradition of America.

Make no mistake, this constitutional amendment should be at the very top of the agenda of this Congress. We owe it to every citizen of this country, and particularly to those brave men and women who have stood in harm's way so that the flag and what it stands for might endure. I urge this body to take a strong stand for what is right and ensure the protection of our flag.

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IN HONOR OF BARBARA BASS  
BAKAR

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**HON. NANCY PELOSI**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, January 3, 2001*

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a wonderful San Franciscan as she